

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEGUCI 01204 081843Z
ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9706
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
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USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 1204

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PINS, NU, HO
SUBJ: JOINT HONDURAN-NICARAGUAN MILITARY OPERATION ALLEGED

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1023 (DTG 281433Z FEB 78)

1. THE HONDURAN COMMITTEE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE HAS ACCUSED THE HONDURAN ARMY OF PLANNING A JOINT OPERATION WITH THE NICARAGUAN NATIONAL GUARD TO SWEEP THE BORDER AREA WHERE THREE FSLN MEMBERS WERE RECENTLY CAPTURED (REFTEL). THE COMMITTEE ALLEGES THAT THE JOINT PLAN, KNOWN AS "OPERATION VELOZ" WAS DEVELOPED BY GUARD OFFICERS AND HONDURAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE CHIEF, LT.COL. LEONIDAS TORRES ARIAS, AIR FORCE COMMANDER LT. COL. DOMINGO ALVAREZ AND SECOND BATTALION COMMANDER.

2. THE SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE IS PRIMARILY A UNIVERSITY AND STUDENT VEHICLE. AS TO BE EXPECTED, A NUMBER OF SIMILARLY ORIENTED GROUPS HAVE JOINED THE SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE'S CONDEMNATION OF THIS ALLEGED ACTION, INCLUDING THE (CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC) CENTRAL CONFEDERATION OF WORKERS AND NATIONAL CAMPESINOS UNION. IN
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PAGE 02 TEGUCI 01204 081843Z

ADDITION, HOWEVER, VICTOR ARTILES OF THE HONDURAN WORKERS CONFEDERATION, THE HONDURAN FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAVE ALSO EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO ANY JOINT OPERATION SUCH AS ALLEGED, AND THE SAN PEDRO DAILY 'TIEMPO' EDITORIALIZES THAT "OPERATION VELOZ IS A SHAMEFUL OPERATION." 'TIEMPO' LAMENTS THAT THE ARMS BOUGHT WITH SUCH SACRIFICE BY THE HONDURAN PEOPLE WILL SERVE TO PROTECT NOT NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY BUT

"THE WORST DICTATOR IN LATIN AMERICA."

3. COMMENT: REACTIONS EMPHASIZE ONCE AGAIN A GENERAL DESIRE TO AVOID INVOLVEMENT IN NICARAGUA'S INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND THE MARKED LACK OF SYMPATHY FOR GENERAL SOMOZA THAT EMBOFFS HAVE NOTED, WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS, IN ALL SECTORS OF HONDURAN SOCIETY. HOWEVER, AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, THE HONDURAN ARMY HAS ANNOUNCED AN INCREASE IN ITS PATROL ACTIVITY ALONG THE BORDER IN AN EFFORT TO DEFEND ITS SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND AS A RESULT OF INCREASING CONCERN OVER THE NICARAGUAN SITUATION. THE SECOND BATTALION INCLUDES SPECIAL TACTICAL UNIT (RANGER) TROOPS WHO HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY THE PRESS AS NEWLY ON PATROL IN THE BORDER AREA, LENDING SOME CREDENCE TO THE SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE'S ALLEGATIONS. BARTCH

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